

Article Alert

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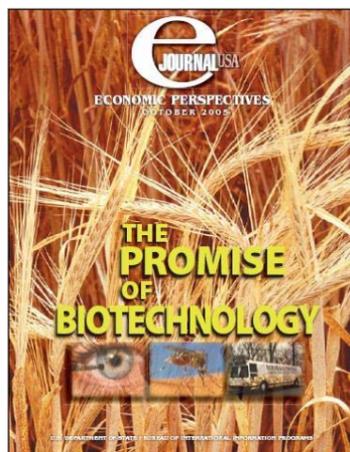
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The books, articles, and web sites described in the Article Alert present a diversity of views in order to keep our IRC users abreast of current issues and concerns in the United States. These items represent the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official U.S. Government policy.

The Promise of Biotechnology

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/1005/ijee/ijee1005.htm>

New E-Journal



This issue of Economic Perspectives explores some of the most promising applications of biotechnology, from microorganisms engineered to produce hydrogen gas from organic waste and bacteria engineered to break down environmental pollutants, to crops that add vitamins to what we eat and novel drugs for treating human diseases such as Alzheimer's and diabetes.

As National Science Adviser John Marburger writes in the introduction to this publication: "Our aim is not simply to understand disease, but to cure it; not only to consume whatever edible we find, but to make it safer, more nutritious; not just to harvest nature's random products for our manufacturers, but to make them stronger, safer, and more adapted to our needs."

If you want to have the print version of this New E-Journal, please see p.3.

Thanksgiving: Nov 24, 2005

http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays.html

Key Document

Thanksgiving is a time for tradition and sharing. Even if family members live far away they often gather for family reunions. As a result, Thanksgiving marks the busiest domestic air travel period of the year. Many Americans enjoy a local Thanksgiving parade, or the annual Macy's department store parade, televised live from New York City. Others watch televised American football, while all give thanks together for their food, shelter and other good things. Many volunteer their time to help civic groups, churches, and charitable organizations offer traditional meals to those in need.

Turkey, corn (or maize), pumpkins and cranberry sauce are symbols that represent the first Thanksgiving. They are often depicted on holiday decorations and greeting cards. Corn represents the survival of the Pilgrim colonies. Used as a table or door decoration, corn represents the harvest and the fall season.

More Resources on Thanksgiving can be found at:

Wikipedia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving>

Thanksgiving day
http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/thanksgiving_day.html

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Information Resource Center

Article Alert

No.11, November 2005

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DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The Emperor Has No Clothes

By Vaclav Havel, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 16, no. 4, October 2005, pp. 5-8

Havel draws parallels between the American Declaration of Independence, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, noting that all were written in simple language that made it possible for people to take them to heart. Especially in regimes where such documents are not taken seriously and whose function is similar to "flag-waving" at parades, Havel calls on democracies to know the true state of affairs in such governments and to speak out at home among their own constituents and in the international field.

2. Assessing the Quality of Municipal Government Web Sites

By James K. Scott, *State and Local Government Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, pp. 151-165

The author, associate professor at the University of Missouri / Columbia, notes that municipal governments have a reputation for quickly adopting new technologies to serve their constituents, and have been at the forefront of developing Web sites to provide public services. This study analyzes twenty U.S. municipal government sites by five quality measures: transparency, ease of citizen-to-government transactions, connectivity, personalization, and usability. Scott notes that his study illustrates the challenges local governments face in maintaining a high-quality Web site in a competitive and fast-changing online environment. His research suggests possible changes in the role in improving the quality of municipal governments' Web sites that could be played by state governments and the federal government, which currently provides little support in local e-government initiatives.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

3. A Market for Ideas: A Survey of Patents and Technology

By Kenneth Cukier, *Economist*, vol. 377, no. 8449, October 22, 2005, special insert

Intellectual property protection can be good for the technology industry as well as for consumers if handled carefully, says Cukier. Finding the right balance between protection and sharing will test the technology industry, policy makers and the public in years to come, he adds. Offering an historical perspective, the author says that ideas and innovation have become the world's most important resource, replacing land, energy and raw materials. Ideas, he says, are to the information age what the physical environment was to the industrial one: the raw materials of economic progress. Generating intellectual property is also less capital-intensive because it relies mainly on people rather than bricks and machinery. Cukier says that sharing intellectual property can be more profitable than keeping it to oneself because sharing can ensure the ideas are taken all the way through to the market. Further, he says, China and India have both learned to challenge Western tech firms through innovation, not just cheap labor, although the United States and Japan still lead the world in terms of numbers of annual patents granted.

4. The Invisible Bankers

By Michael Freedman, *Forbes*, Vol. 176, No. 8, October 17, 2005, p. 94-97

Freedman says terrorists, drug dealers and smugglers are using a global system as old as the Silk Road to finance their operations -- and, there is not much we can do about it. This informal remittance system -- called hawala in Arab countries -- is impossible to track since it is unregulated; involves little, if any, written records; and the funds typically start off "clean" and only become "dirty" much later. He notes that attempts to regulate informal remittance systems have been largely unsuccessful, as costs of compliance and cumbersome paperwork are driving legitimate, licensed operations out of business. In turn, he explains, customers seeking to send legitimate remittances home -- in the cheapest, fastest way possible -- tend to move to the illegitimate money services operations that regulators wish to shut down.

GLOBAL ISSUES

5. What Money Can Buy

By Michael Specter, *New Yorker*, October 24, 2005, pp. 56-71

The author writes that malaria kills as many as three million people every year, mostly in Africa; most of the victims are poor children under five. In interviews with those involved in the fight against malaria, the author outlines the history of efforts to eradicate the disease, and explains the science, treatments, and strategies used today by governments, international organizations, scientific research facilities and private foundations. Specter highlights the leading role played by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, noting that "it would be hard to overestimate the impact that the Gates Foundation has had: the research programs of entire countries have been restored, and fields that had languished for years, like tropical medicine, have once again burst to life." Gates himself says about malaria, "by many measures it's easily the worst thing on the planet... And the only way for that to change is to stop malaria. So that is what we are going to have to do."

6. Who Will Win the Nobel Peace Prize?

By John Sellers, *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 2005 pp. 52-5

When the Nobel Peace Prize is presented, on December 10, the winner will join a veritable Valhalla of do-gooders that includes Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Martin Luther King Jr. So it may sound odd to hear U2's lead singer, Bono, touted as a front-runner-at least by the Irish bookmaker Paddypower.com. The famously earnest champion of Third World debt relief is among a record 199 nominees on this year's "short" list. But acting, bidders: the prize is expected to go to a person or an organization associated with disaster relief for victims of last year's tsunami. This article describes some potential winners.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

7. Grand Strategies for Dealing with Other States in the New, New World Order

By James F. Miskel, *Naval War College Review*, vol. 58, no. 1, Winter 2005, pp. 63-75

Miskel, with the Naval War College, analyzes the allocation of American security-related assistance to other states. He concludes that it would be most effective to base this allocation upon the other country's potential contribution to specific efforts in the war on terrorism. Currently, state-to-state assistance programs are allocated on the basis of assumptions about the role a particular nation plays in the global war on terrorism. Countries are categorized as either pivotal, buffer or failing states and aid is allocated accordingly. In the author opinion, this approach is inconsistent with the security threat that the U.S. faces in the early twenty-first century.

U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES

8. Elegant Vintage

By John Mc Donough, *Down Beat*, Vol. 72, No. 5, May 2005, pp. 34/40

The music and lyrics of Nat King Cole, one of America's great jazz performers and singers, has not lost its appeal even after four decades since his death. The author notes that Cole was the first black singer to cross over into the cultural mainstream, joining such greats as Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. McDonough writes that Nat King Cole was the product of a music industry that no longer exists -- centered around music publishers who concentrated on the song, not the performance. Cole was a reluctant pioneer in a period of still-widespread discrimination, preferring to be apolitical and focus on his work. The longevity of his songs is largely due to the enduring quality of his lyrics, and the absence of period gimmickry that too many pop singers are inclined to do.

9. You Never Know

By Ken Foster, *Poets & Writers*, November/December 2005, pp. 48-54

Ernest Gaines, author of such landmark novels as *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN* and *A LESSON BEFORE DYING*, has been recognized as a master at creating portraits of life in the shadow of slavery in rural Louisiana. His character-driven fiction acknowledges the lingering hierarchy among the African-American, mixed-race Creoles and white landowners, all of whom find themselves tied irrevocably to the land on which they were raised. Now, 40 years after his first novel appeared, readers have his first book in a dozen years, a collection of essays and short stories called *MOZART AND LEADBELLY*. For Gaines, in whose fictional world every individual is significant, writing remains what it has always been -- an act of discovery.

10. Beyond Deep Throat: Other Watergate Mysteries Remain, and The Woodstein Archives Are Full of Clues

By David Greenberg, *Columbia Journalism Review*; Sep/Oct 2005, Vol. 44 Issue 3, p51-53.

This article features the archives of U.S. journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein about the Watergate scandal. Without much fanfare, a huge repository of clues and leads to questions about the scandal is available. In 2003, the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin paid \$5 million for Woodward's and Bernstein's Watergate files. The trove includes interview notes from their history-making newspaper stories and their books "All the President's Men" (1974) and "The Final Days" (1976); book and screenplay manuscript drafts; correspondence; publicity materials; and other assorted documents relating to their coverage of the scandal that forced Nixon to quit the presidency in August 1974. Critics such as Edward Jay Epstein have argued that the journalists simply published information that would have doomed Nixon anyway once the prosecutors brought it to light.

11. The Lost and Found Loves of Samuel Clemens

By Ron Powers, *American History*, December 2005, Vol. 40, Issue 5, p32-72.

Discusses the romantic relationships of Mark Twain, pen name of author Samuel Clemens. Encounter of Twain with Laura Wright, a daughter of a judge, at the freight steamer John J. Roe in 1858; Information on the essay written by Twain chronicling his encounter with Wright; Speculation on why Olivia Langdon turned down the marriage proposal of Twain; Approaches taken by Twain to persuade Langdon into marriage.

ISLAM IN AMERICA

12. Only in America -- The Evolving Muslim American Culture

By Renee Warner Syed, *Nadiyah Sa'id & staff writers*, *Azizah*, Vol.4, Issue 1, p26-27.

The Muslim population is growing and as the second and third generations of Muslims Americans age a unique culture is evolving. It is one marked with hybrid traditions, innovative styles and open dialogue.

13. Muslim High -- Making the Grade

By Qur'an Sabir, *Azizah*, Vol.4, Issue 1, p38-43.

Across the nation, Muslim high schools are turning out graduates who are excelling in Islamic knowledge and academic acumen. They are nestled in big cities, in small towns and suburbs; they are housed in old buildings, or tiny structures, inside a masjid or an elementary school, some have mini gyms or no gymnasiums, some have science lab and libraries. Supported primarily by tuition and creative fundraisers, these Muslim high schools exist in spite of not all having the state of the art buildings and they are producing great scientists, educators, health professionals and business leaders.

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Special Offer

E-Journal, November 2005 "The Promise of Biotechnology"